

Vehicles On a Roll at the Port of Baltimore

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BALTIMORE (WJZ)—Chances are some of the cars in this weekend's Memorial Day traffic rolled off a ship at the Port of Baltimore.

Alex DeMetrick reports, vehicle cargo is driving the port onto the record books.

The specialized ships are huge, designed to roll vehicles off and on.

The cars in this load are not that big, but there are a lot of them. And they are the first ever to arrive at the Port of Baltimore.

"On this ship is about 3,000 Fiats coming off. And we're hoping that will build to 30,000 this year alone," said Jim White, Port of Baltimore director.

The port is on a roll with this kind of cargo.

It topped New York as the top U.S. destination in 2011 with 538,000 vehicle transfers.

Last year was even better with 650,000. And this year is on pace to be as good or better.

"We're number one in car exports and imports, and we want to keep it that way," said Aaron Barnett, Longshoreman's Local vice president.

The more cars that move through the port, the more people are needed to drive them.

"It's a good paying, family supporting job. It pays \$32 an hour, plus benefits, so it's what we're after," White said.

Although Fiats are an Italian brand, these were built in Serbia.

"It's an old Yugo factory. You might remember Yugos. We used to export them in the 80s. They didn't do so good. That's why we decided to produce this state-of-the art model, and we are very excited," said Vladimir Petrovic, Serbian ambassador.

The ambassador showed off the car to former congresswoman and port supporter Helen Delitch Bentley, who pushed the port's product.

"Baltimore has a great quality control program, and that's why we get all of the automobiles," Bentley said.

Well, at least more than any other port in the United States.

More than 1,000 jobs are directly tied to the port's auto business

